

Message Text

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 21418/1

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, VS
SUBJ: REQUEST FOR HIGH LEVEL REVIEW OF PRIORITY FOR U.S.
MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM

1. IT SEEMS QUITE CLEAR THAT A NEW REVIEW AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE FUTURE PRIORITIES TO BE ACCORDED U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM IS IMPERATIVE. ALTHOUGH WE TEND TO CONCENTRATE, QUITE PROPERLY, ON THE STILL EXISTING DEFICIENCIES IN THE ARVN IN ORDER TO CORRECT AND IMPROVE THEM, SUCH CONCENTRATION LEADS US TO OVERLOOK THE INESCAPABLE FACT THAT THE PROCESS OF "VIETNAMIZATION" SO ABLY IMPLEMENTED BY GENERAL ABRAMS WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF ALL THE U.S. ARMED SERVICES HAS, IN FACT, WORKED OUT VERY WELL. THE ARVN HAS NOT ONLY HELD WELL, BUT HAS UP TO NOW KEPT THE OTHER SIDE OFF BALANCE. IF WE REMAIN CONSTANT IN OUR SUPPORT, AND DETERMINED TO CARRY OUT THE COMMITMENTS WE HAVE MADE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL, WE HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO CONFIDENTLY EXPECT THAT THE GVN CAN HOLD WITHOUT THE NECESSITY OF U.S. ARMED INTERVENTION. THEREFORE, THE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES NECESSARY TO DISCHARGE THE COMMITMENTS ALREADY MADE WILL, IN REALITY, RETURN ENORMOUS DIVIDENDS IN THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF U.S. OBJECTIVES NOT ONLY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, BUT THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

2. PERHAPS IT WILL CONTRIBUTE TO PERSPECTIVE TO RECALL THAT IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS WE HAVE WITNESSED AN EVIDENT CONSOLIDATION OF
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INTERNAL SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT THIEU AND HIS ADMINISTRATION; THE REORGANIZATION OF THAT ADMINISTRATION TO BETTER COPE WITH THE ECONOMIC REALITIES, AND THE CONCLUSION OF ECONOMIC AGREEMENTS WITH THE FRG, FRANCE AND JAPAN WHICH WILL HELP SURMOUNT CURRENT PROBLEMS

AND ACT AS A CATALYST IN ATTRACTING OTHER DONORS. THE JOINT GVN AND U.S. ACTIONS IN PUBLICIZING MASSIVE NORTH VIETNAMESE VIOLATIONS OF THE PARIS AGREEMENTS HAS SUCCESSFULLY CONDITIONED WORLD REACTION TO ACCEPT THE STRONG GVN REACTIONS TO THESE DRVN VIOLATIONS AS QUITE PROPER AND NATURAL RESPONSES TO NORTH VIETNAMESE AGGRESSION. THE HIGHEST OFFICIALS OF THE POLISH AND HUNGARIAN ICCS DELEGATIONS HAVE PRIVATELY INFORMED US THAT THEY ESTIMATE THE NVN/VC FORCES CONTROL 20 PERCENT LESS TERRITORY THAN ON JANUARY 28, 1973.

POLITICALLY, THE NVN/VC PROSELYTIZING HAS CLEARLY BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL. OBVIOUSLY, MOSCOW AND PEKING HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT, BOTH POLITICALLY AND MILITARILY, THE INITIATIVE IS PASSING TO THE GVN SIDE.

3. YET THE MILITARY CAPABILITY OF NVN FORCES IS NOW GREATER THAN AT THE TIME OF THE EASTER 1972 OFFENSIVE. WHETHER IT WILL BE UTILIZED IN ANOTHER MAJOR FORCE OFFENSIVE OR BE MAINTAINED AS A DETERRENT TO GVN ELIMINATION OF PRG FORCES IS A DECISION WHICH, I BELIEVE, HAS NOT YET BEEN TAKEN IN HANOI. IT WILL BE GREATLY INFLUENCED ON THEIR ESTIMATE OF THE WILL, THE MORALE, AND THE MILITARY CAPABILITY OF THE RVN. THIS, IN TURN, WILL BE GREATLY CONDITIONED ON THE RVN ESTIMATE OF THE PRESENT VALIDITY OF OUR COMMITMENTS TO THEM.

4. IT IS A BIT HARD HERE IN SAIGON TO DETERMINE THE PRACTICAL EFFECTS OF THE JUST PASSED DEFENSE APPROPRIATION BILL ON OUR ABILITY TO CARRY OUT THE COMMITMENTS MADE SOLEMNLY AND UNEQUIVOCALLY BY THE USG TO THE GVN. HOWEVER, WE HAVE RECEIVED SOME PRELIMINARY INDICATIONS OF WASHINGTON THINKING THAT TRICKLE HALF WAY AROUND THE WORLD. IF THESE ARE ONLY PARTLY TRUE, THEN WE ARE IN CONSIDERABLE DANGER OF VERY SOON BEING IN OPEN, GLARINGLY OBVIOUS DEFAULT OF THOSE COMMITMENTS.

5. THE IMMEDIATE REPERCUSSIONS ON THE INCREASINGLY EVIDENT SELF-CONFIDENCE AND UP-BEAT MORALE OF THE GVN AND THE ARVN, WHILE NOT POSSIBLE TO CALCULATE WITH PRECISION, WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE ADVERSE AND COULD BE MOST SERIOUS. THE SHORT RANGE EFFECT ON THE PRESENTLY DELICATE AND FRAGILE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIETS, SECRET

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THE CHINESE, THE MIDDLE EAST AND EVEN WITH EUROPE, SHOULD WE WELSH ON OUR COMMITMENTS HERE, CAN BEST BE DETERMINED IN THE WHITE HOUSE. BUT IT SEEMS SELF-EVIDENT THAT THE ONE MOST SINGLE PRECIOUS COMMODITY WE POSSESS JUST NOW IS THE FAITH OF OTHERS IN THE CONSTANCY AND RELIABILITY OF AMERICAN COMMITMENTS. THE COST OF OUR FAILURE TO KEEP IT HERE, EVEN IN DOLLAR TERMS, WILL BE INCALCULABLY GREATER THAN THE IMMEDIATE SUMS THAT NOW SEEMS TO BE IN QUESTION.

6. I AM QUITE AWARE THAT RESERVES OF ALL THE SERVICES HAVE BEEN DANGEROUSLY DEPLETED BY THE EMERGENCY DEMANDS OF ENHANCE, ENHANCE PLUS, AND THE RECENT EMERGENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR ISRAEL, NEVERTHELESS, I AM CONVINCED THAT THE INGENUITY AND RESOURCEFULNESS

OF THE ARMED SERVICES CAN FIND WAYS TO MEET OUR REQUIREMENTS, IF ONLY OUR CIVILIAN LEADERS WILL UNEQUIVOCALLY ESTABLISH THE OVER-RIDING NATIONAL PRIORITY THAT MUST BE ACCORDED MEETING THESE REQUIREMENTS.

7. BEFORE THE JANUARY AGREEMENTS, AT THE TIME OF THE JANUARY AGREEMENTS, AFTER THE JANUARY AGREEMENTS, AGAIN AT THE TIME OF THE JUNE COMMUNIQUE, AND MOST ESPECIALLY AT THE SAN CLEMENTE MEETING IN APRIL BETWEEN PRESIDENT NIXON AND PRESIDENT THIEU, WE HAVE REITERATED THE COMMITMENT THAT WE WILL MAINTAIN THE ARMAMENT LEVEL EXISTING ON A ONE-FOR-ONE REPLACEMENT BASIS, YET, ALMOST FROM THE BEGINNING EVERY ACTION WE HAVE TAKEN SEEMS, UPON REVIEW, TO HAVE BEEN CALCULATED TO CONVINCE SENIOR OFFICERS OF THE ARVN THAT WE WERE NOT REALLY SERIOUS ABOUT KEEPING THAT PLEDGE. OF THE MANY EXAMPLES I WILL MENTION ONLY TWO:

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8. THE FACT IS THAT WITH 52 PERCENT OF THE VNAF TOTAL PERSONNEL STRENGTH IN TRAINING, IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE THAT MAINTENANCE OF VNAF AIRCRAFT WOULD CONSTITUTE A PROBLEM. BOTH THE VNAF AND WE HAVE INSTITUTED CORRECTIVE ACTION WITH THE HELP OF THE USAF. YET WHEN SUGGESTIONS ARE RECEIVED FROM WASHINGTON TO ADD 8 PERFECTLY FLYABLE F5A'S TO THOSE SCHEDULED TO BE REMOVED FOR "CORROSION CONTROL", AND IT JUST SO HAPPENS THAT THE ADDITION OF THIS PARTICULAR NUMBER COINCIDES WITH THE NEED PERCEIVED IN WASHINGTON FOR IRAN AND KOREA REPAYMENT, THE RVNAF AND ARVN QUITE NATURALLY WONDER ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF THIS KIND OF GAME PLAYING. THE CURRENT END RESULT IS THAT PRESIDENT THIEU HAS ORDERED THE VNAF TO INFLICT MAXIMUM POSSIBLE DAMAGE IN RETALIATORY RAIDS IN RESPONSE TO DRVN VIOLATIONS OF THE CEASEFIRE, BUT TO LOSE NO AIRCRAFT IN THE PROCESS SINCE ALL WILL BE DESPERATELY NEEDED WHEN A MAJOR FORCE ATTACK IS MADE. CONSEQUENTLY, THE VNAF, ALTHOUGH WILLING AND ABLE TO AGGRESSIVELY PRESS LOW LEVEL ATTACKS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO FLY LOW ENOUGH OVER TARGETS TO ACHIEVE THE PRECISION RESULTS OF WHICH

THEY ARE CAPABLE. IF I COULD INFORM PRESIDENT THIEU THAT REPLACEMENTS OF F5A'S WOULD BE AUTOMATIC, THE RESULTS WOULD BE STARTLING. UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES I CANNOT DO THIS, DESPITE THE FACT THAT WE ARE COMMITTED TO DO SO.

9. THE SECOND EXAMPLE IS THAT DESPITE THE COMMITMENT FOR ONE-FOR-ONE REPLACEMENT, DESPITE THE PACE OF THE FIGHTING SINCE THE "CEASE-

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FIRE" IN JANUARY AND JUNE WHICH HAS RESULTED IN A GREATER TOTAL OF CASUALTIES THAN THE TOTAL OF U.S. CASUALTIES DURING OUR YEARS OF ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT. USARPAC'S TENTATIVE AMMUNITION REPLACEMENT THROUGH THE BALANCE OF THIS FISCAL YEAR WOULD LEAVE A PROJECTED BALANCE ON 1 JULY FAR BELOW THE CEASE-FIRE LEVEL THAT REPRESENTS A MINIMUM SAFETY POSITION AGAINST BOTH ENEMY CAPABILITIES AND ALSO PRESENT ESTIMATES OF THEIR INTENTIONS. THE FOLLOWING TABLE GRAPHICALLY ILLUSTRATES THE PROBLEM.

	PROJECTED BALANCE END JUNE	CEASEFIRE LEVEL
40 MM HE	779,000	4,093,000
60 MM HE	248,000	3,038,000
81 MM ILLUM	32,000	175,300
66 MM LAW	21,000	
	106,700	

10 THESE ROUNDS HAVE BEEN SELECTED AS EXAMPLES BECAUSE THEY ARE UNIQUE TO ARVN AMMUNITION REQUIREMENTS. AS USED IN THE DELTA THE 40 MM ROUND HAS EFFECTIVELY INCREASED MOBILITY OF ARVN FORCES IN RESISTING ENEMY ACTIVITIES. THE 60 MM AND 81 MM ILLUM ARE MORTAR ROUNDS SUBSTITUTING FOR HEAVY ARTILLERY REQUIREMENTS WITHIN THE SMALL ARVN DEFENSE PERIMETERS. THE 66 MM LAW IS THE MAIN ARVN WEAPON FOR DEFENSE AGAINST THE VERY REAL ENEMY TANK THREAT WHICH NOW EXISTS.

11. THESE ARE ONLY TWO EXAMPLES, BUT ENOUGH TO UNDERSCORE THE PROBLEM. THE QUICKEST, EASIEST AND LEAST EXPENSIVE WAY TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES WE HAVE FORMALLY SET FOR OURSELVES IS TO REAFFIRM THE PRIORITIES ALREADY ESTABLISHED AND PERMIT THE ARMED SERVICES TO PROCEED WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMS THEY NOW HAVE BEFORE THEM. ORIGINAL ESTIMATES WERE MADE ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE CEASEFIRE WOULD BE REASONABLY RESPECTED BY THE OTHER SIDE. GIVEN THE INCREASED LEVEL OF MILITARY ACTIVITY THROUGHOUT SOUTH VIET-NAM WE ESTIMATE THAT WE WILL NEED A MINIMUM OF \$494.4 MILLION MORE THAN THE PROJECTED \$1.126 IN FY 74. THIS IS BROKEN DOWN AS FOLLOWS:

\$180 FOR GROUND AMMUNITION.

\$69.7 FOR EQUIPMENT NOT CALLED FORWARD OR ABOVE PROGRAM LEVELS.

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\$200 FOR PRIORITY RVNAF REQUIREMENTS (ESTIMATE).

\$10 FOR MEDICAL SUPPLIES.

\$3 TO OPERATE ADDITIONAL LSTS.

\$4.3 FOR SUBSISTENCE

\$9 FOR AIR MUNITIONS

\$18.4 FOR POL

\$494.4 TOTAL

12. THE ADDITION OF THIS TOTAL OF \$494.4 MILLION TO THE \$1.126 BILLION BRINGS US TO THE TOTAL OF \$1.62 BILLION WE WILL NEED IN THE FISCAL YEAR TO REASONABLY DISCHARGE OUR COMMITMENTS. I REITERATE I AM FULLY AWARE OF THE BURDEN THIS WILL PUT ON THE SERVICES BUT I ALSO REITERATE MY CONVICTION THAT, GIVEN CLEAR AND UNEQUIVOCAL STATEMENT OF THE PRIORITIES AND GOALS BY THE HIGHEST LEVELS, THEIR INGENUITY AND RESOURCEFULNESS WILL FIND THE WAY TO IMPLEMENT SUCH DECISIONS.

MARTIN

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